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## THE FOUR-YEAR LATIN PROGRAMMES OF THE COMMITTEE OF TWELVE

At the Holiday Conference of the Academic Principals' Association of the State of New York held at Syracuse, December 28-30, I made certain criticisms upon the recently issued four-year Latin programmes of the Committee of Twelve of the American Philological Association. An abstract of my remarks appeared in the *SCHOOL REVIEW* for February. This, though entirely accurate so far as it goes, seems to me so little calculated adequately to explain my attitude on this subject, that I gladly embrace the opportunity, kindly extended to me by the editor of the *SCHOOL REVIEW*, of here publishing a full statement of what I said at the Syracuse Conference.<sup>1</sup>

My first criticism touches certain details of the proposed courses. The plan of the first year is as follows:

Latin lessons, accompanied from an early stage by the reading of simple selections such as those in *Gradatim*.

Easy readings, twenty to forty pages, of a consecutive text, such as *Viri Romæ*.

The reading of the Latin with an understanding of the sense independently of, and preliminary to, the formal rendering into idiomatic English.

Practice in reading aloud, with due attention to quantity and accent.

Memorizing of short and interesting passages.

Now I am free to confess that were I to teach elementary Latin I should hesitate to follow this programme for myself. To me it seems a mistake to insist on postponing till the second year the reading of a continuous prose author—Cæsar or Nepos. Some simple Latin, like the old fables, Roman history, or *Viri Romæ*, is undoubtedly desirable or, possibly, even necessary, in order successfully to bridge the chasm lying between the acquisi-

<sup>1</sup> I include also some points which lack of time prevented me from taking up. The conference generously extended the time originally allotted me, but even this did not afford adequate opportunity for a full discussion.

tion of the forms and elementary syntax on the one hand, and the reading of Cæsar or Nepos on the other. But my own experience for a number of years with elementary classes leads me to believe that with average pupils twenty to twenty-four weeks of properly directed effort ought to be sufficient to prepare them for the successful study of Cæsar or Nepos. Repeated discussion of this point, both orally and by correspondence, has convinced me, too, that this view is somewhat widely held.

In the programme for the second year the reading recommended is :

Any three or four books of Cæsar's *Gallic War*, or any two books, with an equivalent for the other book (or books) in selections from Nepos or other prose writers.

Ovid, 500 lines of the *Metamorphoses*, to follow the reading of Cæsar.

The suggestion of Ovid at this stage of the students' reading strikes me as unfortunate. I have always felt that there was the greatest weight in the views of those teachers of Greek who insist that it is a mistake for the boy who has just finished his three or four books of Xenophon to plunge into Homer. This transition from prose to poetry, occurring before the student can fairly be expected to have obtained the requisite mastery of the prose idiom, is likely to do much to unsettle his knowledge of Attic prose, and at all events it must fail in giving greater breadth and security of knowledge of prose usage, the one positive attainment that ought to be presupposed as existing in the candidate for college. Just so as regards Latin. To undertake the reading of Latin poetry with its widely different vocabulary, word-equivalence and especially syntax, after four books, or possibly only three books, of Cæsar seems to me likely to unsettle the pupil's knowledge of standard prose usage, at the very time when he ought to be industriously completing and extending it.

The plan for the third year is :

Sallust, *Catiline*.

Cicero, *Orations against Catiline*.

Virgil, *Æneid*, Books I, II.

For the fourth year :

Virgil, *Æneid*, Books III–VI.

Two Orations of Cicero.

Ovid, 1000 lines (where practicable.)

Two other plans for the work of the third and fourth years are suggested as alternatives, but the courses just given receive the preference in the complete four-year programme of the committee. The plan is that recommended by the New England Commission of Colleges several years ago, and cannot be characterized as a happy one. It is difficult to believe that it represents in any large degree views reached by the mature experience of men engaged in secondary Latin instruction. To interrupt the continuity of the reading of Cicero by reading Virgil, and to interrupt the continuity of the reading of Virgil by the long vacation, seems a great loss in economy without any discernible compensating advantage.

Besides these specific criticisms of various details of the courses proposed, I cannot suppress the conviction that the course as a whole is too heavy. Four years is a short time, the secondary curriculum is already full, the pupils' time and strength are limited, and even at present the preparation in Latin is wretchedly inadequate. Students who come to college can seldom read five lines of Latin with anything like precision of quantity and accent; they can seldom write simple detached sentences involving the more difficult mood and tense usages, to say nothing of a mastery of word-order or the acquisition of a sense for style.<sup>1</sup> All of which prompts the question, whether we do not already attempt to do too much, and whether it would not be better to omit Sallust and Ovid in the average four-year course, and devote the time thus saved to securing greater accuracy in some of the particulars above enumerated where its absence is now most keenly felt. For one I am ready with an affirmative answer to this inquiry.

<sup>1</sup> I am aware that in published entrance tests it is customary to prescribe an ability to write simple Latin prose, but I am credibly informed that the facility is seldom, if ever, attained.

My second criticism touches a matter of principle. It is this: I cannot concede the wisdom of urging upon the secondary schools any such detailed uniformity of curriculum and sequence of authors as that recommended in the report of the Committee of Twelve. I cannot concede the wisdom of doing this, because I feel sure that no two teachers teach alike. They may have like ends in view, but they reach these by methods as various as human personality itself. The teacher ought to be free; he ought to have no fetters put upon him as regards the methods he employs to reach his ends. If he is fit to teach, he will wisely adapt his ways of teaching to the object in view; if he is unfit, he will scarcely profit by undertaking to practice conformity to a scheme devised by others. I have already indicated above how radically different my own methods would be from those recommended by the committee in the conduct of the first-year work. By the middle of the year I should expect to begin Cæsar or Nepos, and to make considerable headway with the author chosen by the end of the first year. But in this I trust I may not be misunderstood; I am not urging my own plan as a necessary one, or an ideal one for all teachers. All I claim is the right of every man to do his own work in his own way. For those who would follow the course mapped out by the committee, either for the first year or for other years, I should claim with just as much earnestness the fullest liberty of choice.

So far, then, as the recommendations of the Committee of Twelve tend to limit the teacher's freedom in arranging and conducting his own work, I cannot refrain from regarding them as unwise. The efficiency of the teacher must depend largely upon his personal sense of responsibility. The report of the committee seems to me to have a dangerous centralizing tendency, the effect of which would be to shift the responsibility from the individual teacher to the Philological Association—a most unfortunate metathesis. In short, my own conviction is clear not only that the recommendations of the committee are uncalled for, but that their adoption would be most inimical to the cause of Latin teaching and to education in general.

Nor is it clear that the Committee of Twelve were ever asked or expected to prepare model courses. The mandate under which they are acting was a telegram received from the Joint Committee of Ten of the National Educational Association at the time of the Buffalo meeting in 1896, and reads as follows :

'The joint committee on college entrance requirements of the departments of higher and secondary education of the National Educational Association formally invite the American Philological Association to prepare at its convenience a report on the proper course of secondary instruction in Latin and Greek for the information and use of the joint committee.'<sup>1</sup>

I cannot in this communication see any request for model courses. Nor in the very full statement of the plan of work of the Joint Committee for 1896-7 given at the Buffalo meeting by Professor Hinsdale,<sup>2</sup> is there any suggestion that the committee wished model courses. As a committee engaged in the task of adjusting secondary curricula to college entrance requirements, I was at a loss to see of what use detailed model courses could possibly be to them in their deliberations. All of these considerations led me to believe that it had not been their desire to have model courses submitted to them by the American Philological Association, and this conviction was decidedly confirmed when I received the most positive personal assurance to the same effect from one of the members of the Joint Committee who had been most active in preparing the plan of work of the committee as presented in outline by Professor Hinsdale and found in the proceedings of the National Educational Association for 1896, p. 558.

Believing, therefore, as I did that the courses submitted by the Committee of Twelve were unwise, believing further that the recommendation of any uniform courses was a mistake, I felt it only just to the Joint Committee to point out that their obvious intention had been misunderstood.

One word by way of closing. In my remarks before the associated principals at Syracuse I stated that the action of the

<sup>1</sup> Proceedings American Philological Association, 1896, p. lv.

<sup>2</sup> Proceedings N. E. A., 1896, p. 558 f.

Joint Committee originated with the committee itself. The editor of the *SCHOOL REVIEW* in a footnote printed in the February number points out that this is an error. I cheerfully accept the correction and regret the mistake. In extenuation, however, I feel I ought to urge that the printed minutes of the proceedings of the National Educational Association are alone responsible for my blunder. Those minutes<sup>1</sup> state that Professor Hinsdale presented to the Secondary Department a report of the plan of work of the Joint Committee for 1896-7. The plan is given at length. No mention of discussion follows and the next minute reads: "The Secretary gave an oral *report of the committee* for the year. The *report of the committee* was accepted and adopted." In perfect good faith I supposed this to mean that the "report of the committee for the year" was adopted. Such, I am confident, would be the interpretation of any one who was not previously familiar with the facts. The editor of the *SCHOOL REVIEW* assures me, however, that the reference is to the plan of work submitted by Professor Hinsdale, and I am satisfied that this must be correct.

For the work of the joint committee I have only the heartiest sympathy and the profoundest respect. The task it has undertaken is of the highest importance, and the zeal, intelligence, and self-sacrifice with which the members of the committee are dealing with the problem command unqualified admiration. My earnest hope is that they may receive unstinted coöperation along the lines of their own endeavor.

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<sup>1</sup> Proceedings N. E. A., 1896, p. 558 f.